1

"Amarilli, mia bella"

from *Le nuove musiche*
le nwɔve muzike

Giulio Caccini
dʒuljo kat:ʃini

amaril:li mia bɛl:la
Amarilli, mia bella,
Amaryllis, my beautiful-one,

non kredio del mio kɔr doltʃe dezio
Non credi, o del mio cor dolce desio,
not do-you-believe, o of-[the] my heart sweet desire,

dɛs:ser tu lamor mio
D'esser tu l'amor mio?
of-to-be you [the]-love my?

kredilo pur e se timor tas:sale
Credilo pur, e se timor t'assale,
Believe-it nevertheless, and if fear you-assails,

prɛndi kwesto mio strale
Prendi questo mio strale,
take this my arrow,

aprimil pɛt:to e vedrai skrit:toil kɔre
Aprimi il petto e vedrai scritto il core:
Open-to-me the bosom, and you-will-see written the heart:

amaril:li ɛil mioamore
Amarilli è il mio amore.
Amaryllis is [the] my love.

Poetic idea

"You are my beloved, and you must believe that I am faithful to you." Despite the long tones and minor mode, this song is not sad, but rather persuasive and reassuring.

Background

Caccini was a tenor singer employed by the Medici family, who were the Dukes of Tuscany and famous patrons of art. Caccini was renowned for his singing and he accompanied himself on the archlute. His wife and children were also professional singers, and his daughter Francesca was a respected composer.

Source

(1) *Le nuove musiche*, Florence, 1601, re-published by Performers' Facsimiles, New York. For treble voice (G-clef) and continuo. Key: G minor, with a signature of one flat. Meter: four half-notes (four beats) per measure. For ease of reading, I have added bar-lines so that there are two half-notes (two beats) per measure.

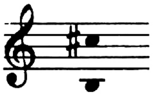
Caccini called *"Amarilli"* a *madrigale*, a through-composed piece with uneven phrase-lengths; he used *aria* to describe strophic songs composed in dance rhythms.

In a few places the placement of syllables is changed to make shorter phrases. In m18 and m35 Caccini tied the first two notes and combined *to e* on the third note. In m25 and m42 Caccini wrote a dotted half-note, with *-li è il* slurred together on the dotted eighth. Caccini slurred m45 to the first note in m46 and combined *-li è il* on the second note. Italian singers frequently adjust notes in these ways for the sake of comfort in breathing.

The familiar version of *"Amarilli"*, as edited by Alessandro Parisotti in *Arie Antiche*, vol. 1 (Milan: Ricordi, 1885), changes Caccini's music in still more ways. The incorrect meter signature of 4/4 causes singers to take the music too slowly, and the steady quarter-note movement makes the tempo too strict. The text *Prendi questo mio strale* ("Take my arrow") was changed to a gentler, less graphic line, *Dubitar non ti vale* ("To doubt does not avail you").

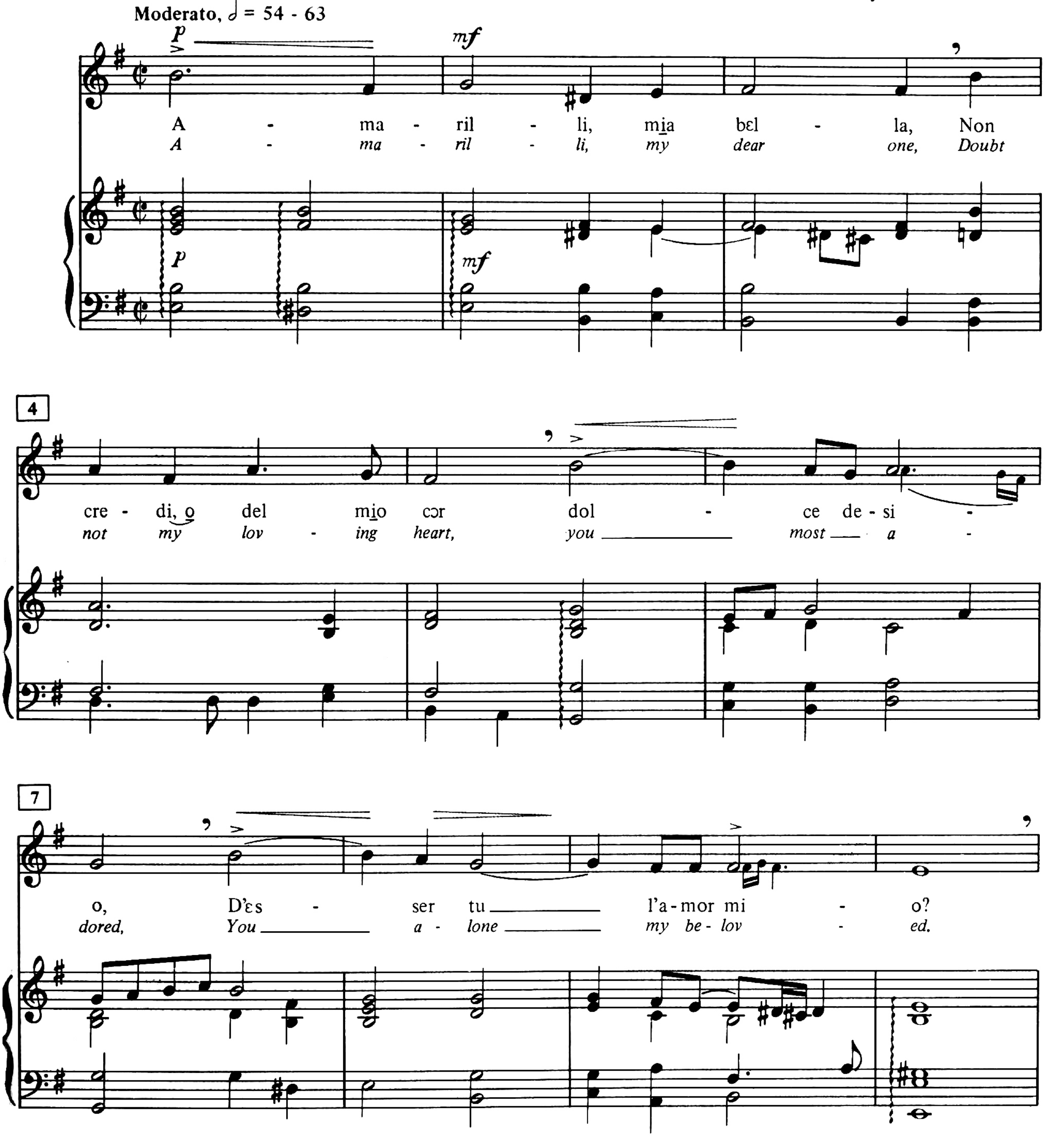
Amarilli, mia bella

Amarilli, my dear one

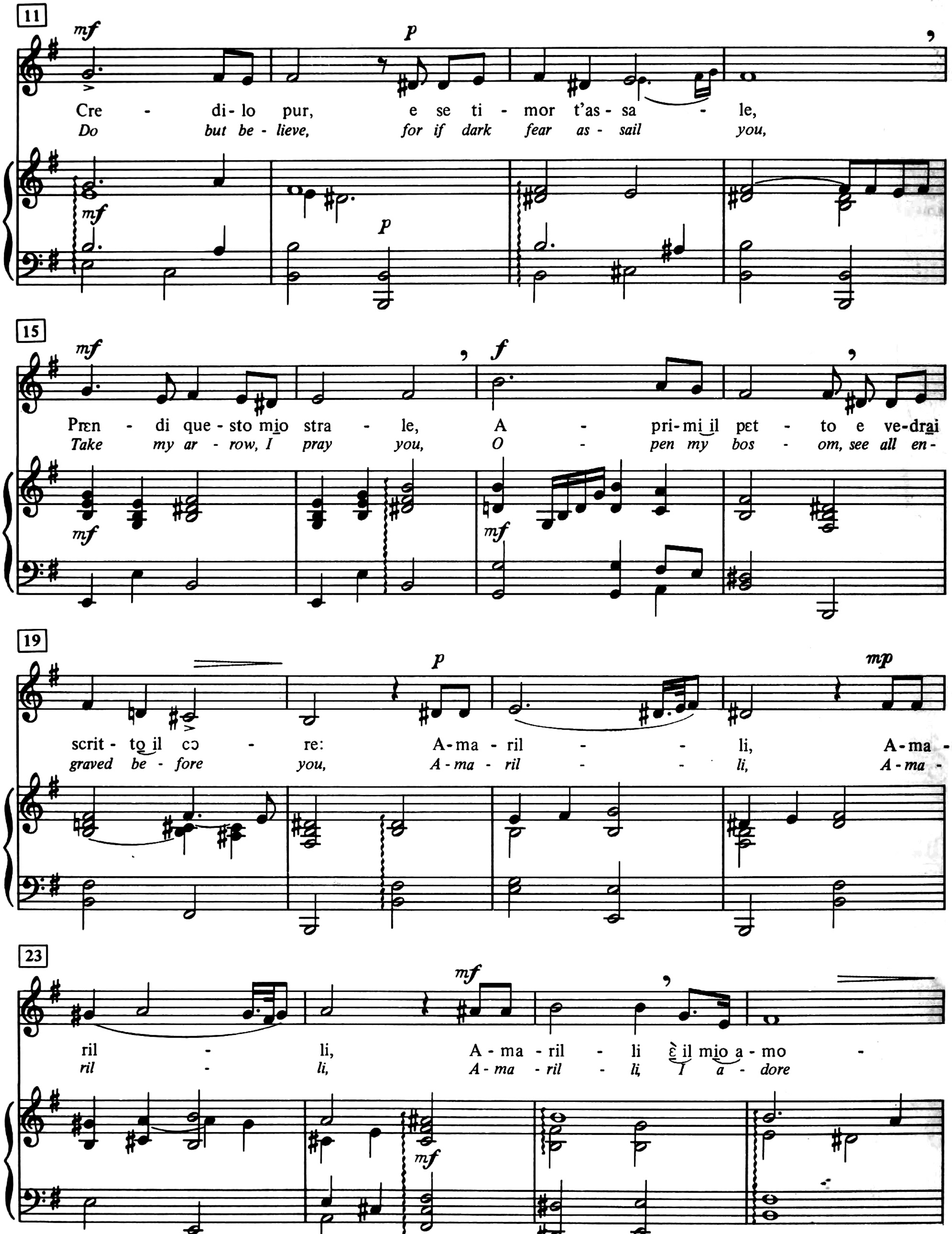


Guarini
English version by
James P. Dunn

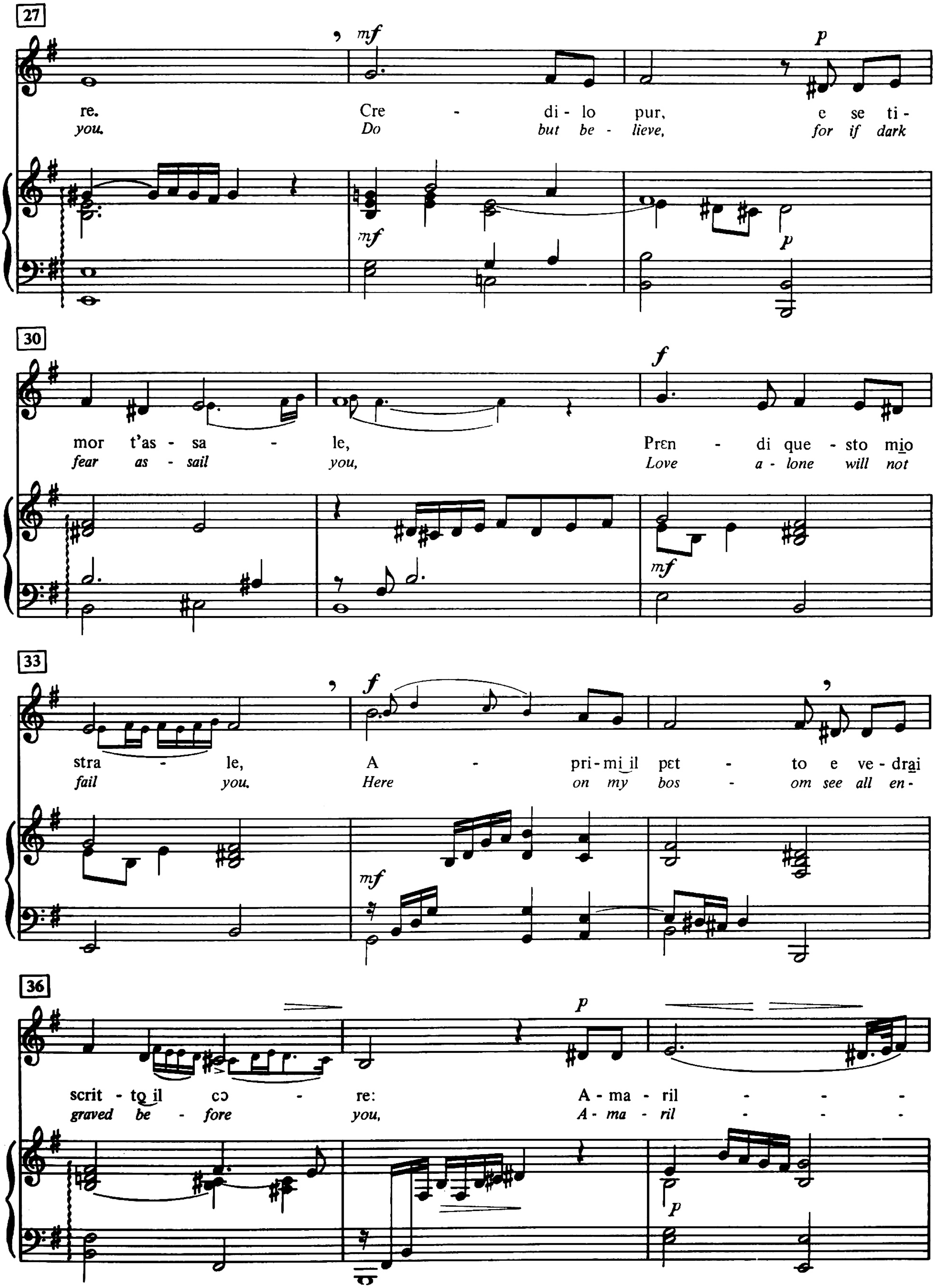
Giulio Caccini (ca.1545-1618)
Edited by John Glenn Paton

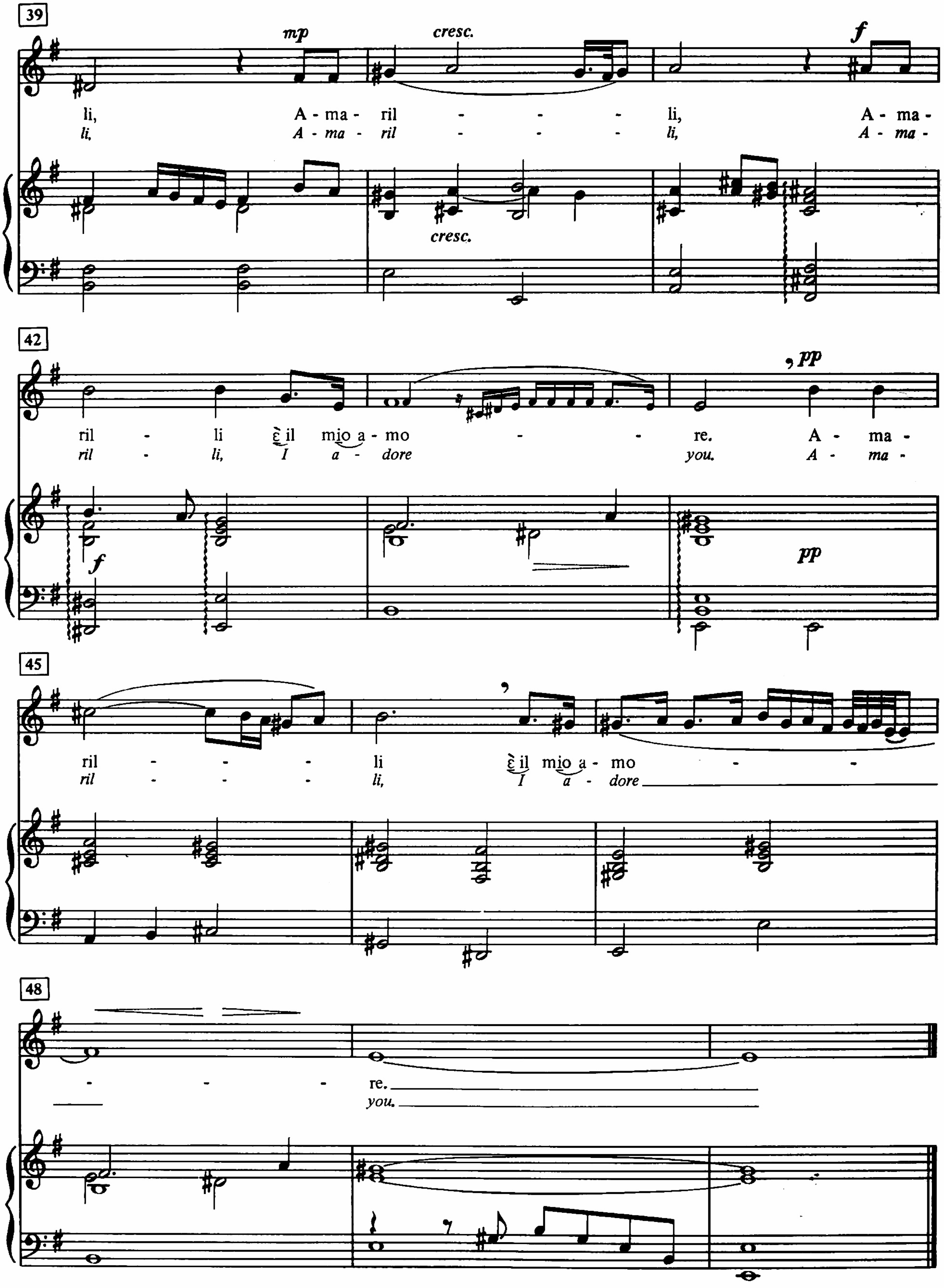


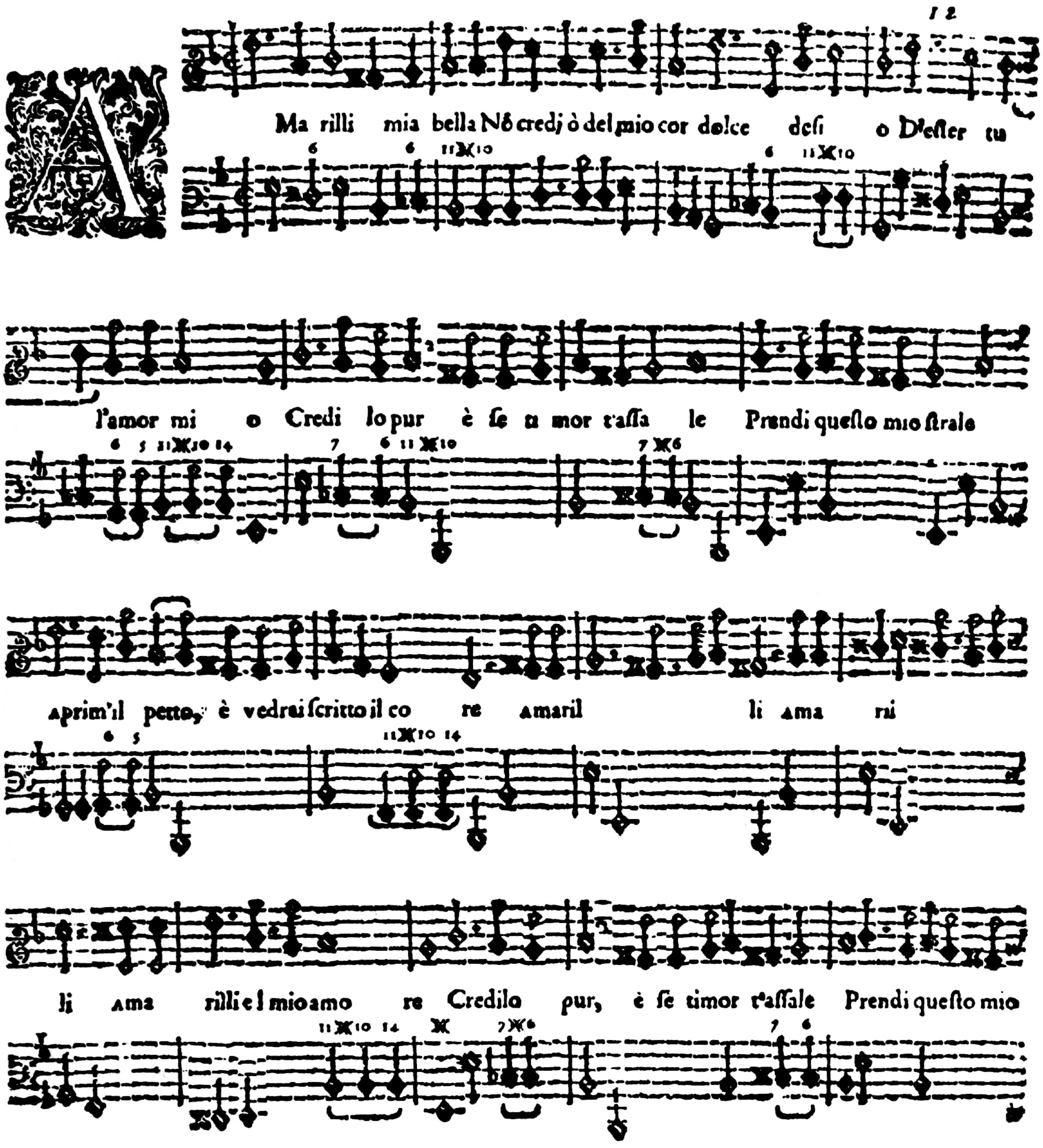
Idiomatic translation: Amaryllis, my beautiful one, do you not believe, O my heart's sweet desire, that you are my beloved?



Believe it, nevertheless, and if fear assails you, take this arrow, open my bosom, and you will see written on my heart, "Amaryllis is my love."


27
re. Cre - di - lo pur, e se ti -
you. Do but be - lieve, for if dark
30
mor t'as - sa - le, Pren - di que - sto mio
fear as - sail you, Love a - lone will not
33
stra - le, A - pri - mi il pet - to e ve - drai
fail you. Here on my bos - om see all en -
36
scrit - to il co - re: A - ma - ril - - - -
graved be - fore you, A - ma - ril - - - -


39
mp
cresc.
f
li, A - ma - ril - - - li, A - ma -
li, A - ma - ril - - - li, A - ma -
cresc.
42
pp
ril - li è il mio a - mo - - re. A - ma -
ril - li, I a - dore you. A - ma -
f
pp
45
ril - - - - li è il mio a - mo - - -
ril - - - - li, I a - dore
48
- - - re.
you.



Amarilli, mia bella

A page from *Le nuove musiche* by Giulio Caccini, published in 1601. The staff lines are not perfectly straight because they are made of many pieces of movable type, one for each musical symbol. Only the voice and continuo parts are given, along with a few numbers that indicate what chords the accompanist should play. Notice that the bass line has the F clef on the third line rather than on the fourth line; the first bass note is G. As a help for sight-reading, there is a mark at the end of each staff, which indicates the line or space of the first note on the next line.